

SOME MAGICIANS I HAVE MET.

BY HENRY RIDGELY EVANS.

I.

IMRO FOX, "the comic conjurer," was born May 21, 1852, in Bromberg, Germany. He came to the United States in 1874, and after serving as a *chef de cuisine* in several New York hotels, finally came to Washington where he presided over the kitchen of the old Hotel Lawrence, a famous resort for vaudeville people. When not engaged in his culinary duties, he practised sleight-of-hand tricks. In the year 1880, a strolling company came to the city, having as its bright, particular star a magician. The man of mystery, alas, was addicted to the flowing bowl, and went on a spree after the first night's performance. The manager of the troupe, who was staying at the Lawrence, was in despair. He told his woes to the proprietor of the hotel, who informed him that the *chef* of the establishment was a conjurer. Descending to the "lower regions" (a capital place, by the way, in which to seek a disciple of the black art), the theatrical man discovered the genial Imro studying a big volume. Near by a black cat sat blinking at him. Upon the stove was a huge caldron. The *mise en scène* of the place was decidedly that of a wizard's studio. But things are seldom what they seem.

The book which Fox was so industriously conning proved to be a dictionary of the French language, not a black-letter tome on sorcery. The *chef* was engaged in making up a *ménù card*, in other words giving French names to good old Anglo-Saxon dishes. The caldron contained soup. The cat was the regular feline habitué of a kitchen, not an imp or familiar demon.

"The *chef*, I believe," said the manager, politely.

"I am," said Fox.

"You are an amateur conjurer!"

"I amuse myself with legerdemain occasionally."

"You're the man I'm looking for. I am the proprietor of a vaudeville company playing at The gentleman who does the magic turn for me has disappeared; gone on a spree. . . ."

"Ah, I see," interrupted Imro, "a devotee of the 'inexhaustible bottle' trick."

"I want you to take his place," said the manager, "and fill out the week's engagement. I will arrange matters with the hotel proprietor for you."

"Donner und Blitzen!" cried Fox, "why I never was on a stage before in my life. I'd die with fright. Face an audience? I'd rather face a battery of cannons."

"Nonsense," answered the theatrical man. "Do help me like a good fellow. It will be money in your pocket."

After considerable persuasion Fox consented. The culinary department was turned over to an assistant. That night Imro appeared on the stage, habited in a hired dress suit that did not fit him like the proverbial "paper on the wall." With fear and trembling he made his bow, and broke the ice by the following allusion to his very bald pate: "Ladies and gentlemen, why is my head like Heaven? . . . You give it up! Good! Because there is no parting there!" Amid the shout of laughter occasioned by this conundrum, Fox began his card tricks. In the argot of the stage, he "made good."

This event decided him; he abandoned cooking for conjuring; *ménù* cards for the making of programmes.

His entertainment is quite original. The curtain rises on a gloomy cavern. In the middle is a boiling caldron, fed by witches *à la* Macbeth. An aged necromancer, dressed in a long robe with a pointed cap on his head enters. He begins his incantations, whereupon hosts of demons appear, who dance about the caldron. Suddenly amid the crash of thunder and a blinding flash of light, the wizard's cave is metamorphosed into a twentieth century drawing-room, fitted up for a conjuring *séance*. The decrepit sorcerer is changed into a gentleman in evening dress—Mr. Fox—who begins his up-to-date entertainment of modern magic. Is this not cleverly conceived?

II.

A few thumbnail sketches of some of the local magicians of New York City will not come amiss. First, there is Elmer P. Ransom, familiarly known as "Pop." He was born in *old* New

York, not far from Boss Tweed's house. He still lives in that quaint part of the city. He knows New York like a book. Once he guided me through the Jewish ghetto, the Italian and Chinese quarters. It was a rare treat. Ransom is a good all around magician, who believes in the old school of apparatus combined with sleight-of-hand. And so do I.

Next we have Adrian Plate, who was born in Utrecht, Holland, in 1844. His rooms in upper New York are the Mecca of all visiting magicians. He has a fine collection of books on magic, and a scrap-book *par excellence*. Thanks to this clever conjurer I have secured translations of rare and curious Dutch works on necromancy. Plate has always something new up his sleeve.

T. Francis Fritz (Frank Ducrot) edits *Mahatma*, a magazine for magicians, and is a good conjurer.

Sargent, the "Merry Wizard," is an adept in the psychology of deception and a recognized authority on the subject of patter. His articles on magic, published in *Mahatma*, are very interesting. He wields a facile pen as well as a wand, and like Silas Wegg occasionally drops into poetry. His poetical effusion, "In Martinka's Little Back Shop," brought out some years ago in *Mahatma*, has been widely copied.

Henry V. A. Parsell, the archivist of the S. A. M., is a devotee of magic and freemasonry; a student of the occult; and a mechanical engineer by profession. He is especially fond of electrical tricks. He signs himself *Paracelsus*, not that he has any special love for the Bombast of Hohenheim but because the name is a euphonic paraphrase of his own cognomen, and redolent of sorcery.

Dr. Goldin Mortimer, the president of the S. A. M., is a gentleman of culture. He was born in New York City, December 27, 1854. He began life as a magician, and was a pupil of Robinson, the Fakir of Vishnu. He eventually toured the country with an entertainment of the Heller order, known as "Mortimer's Mysteries" and was very successful. Graduating finally as a physician, he abandoned the *art magique* as a profession.

Krieger, the arch-master of cup-and-ball conjuring, the successor of Bosco, often drops into Martinka's. He is of Jewish birth. With his little family he travels about, giving exhibitions of his skill, at summer hotels, seaside resorts, clubs, lyceums, etc. The errant propensities of the Krieger ménage gained for it the sobriquet of the "Wandering Few," a paraphrase of the title of Eugene Sue's weird novel, *The Wandering Jew*. To listen to Krieger's funny accent; to see him shake his bushy locks; to watch his deft fingers

manipulate the little cork balls, is to enjoy a rare treat. When the small balls grow to large ones and finally change into onions, potatoes, lemons, and apples you are quite ready to acknowledge that Krieger's art is the acme of legerdemain.

But the prince of Hanky Panky is undoubtedly Nate Leipziger. For close work with cards, coins, watches, handkerchiefs, and the like he is pre-eminent in this country, perhaps in any country. His great forte is amusing after-dinner parties. His art is extremely subtle and undetectable, even to those acquainted with the mysteries of magic. He is the inventor of many new sleights and conjuring artifices.

Leipziger was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1873, and was apprenticed at an early age to an optical instrument maker. Grinding and polishing lenses is his trade, but he abandoned it for conjuring when he came to the United States. It is a curious fact that the majority of great magicians have been recruited from among watchmakers, optical instrument manufacturers, chemists, and physicians. Hundreds of them have been doctors. Among our American Indians medicine and magic are synonymous terms. The "medicine man" is the High Priest, the Mage, of the tribe. As every student of psychology knows there is a good deal of humbug about the practice of medicine. Suggestion aided by deception in the way of bread pills and harmless philtres effect as many cures as potent drugs. Surgery is an exact science, medicine is experimental. The medico takes naturally to magic, for he is already an adept in the art of suggestion. Apropos of this let me quote a sentence from a review by Joseph Jastrow (*Psychological Review*, Vol. 7, p. 617): "A dominant principle, most frequently illustrated, is the kinship of conjuring to suggestion; for it is the suggestion of things not done quite as much as the concealment of those that are done that determines the success of modern conjuring."

III.

Horace Goldin is known as the "Whirlwind Wizard," so called because of the rapidity of his work. His tricks and illusions follow each other with kaleidoscopic effect. Goldin can compress more magic feats in a twenty-minutes turn, than the average conjurer can execute in an hour. But his act is a silent one; he uses no patter whatever. As a general rule this is to be condemned. Amateurs are warned against it. Says Professor Jastrow, the psychologist: "The 'patter,' or setting of a trick often constitutes the real art of its execution, because it directs, or rather misdirects, the

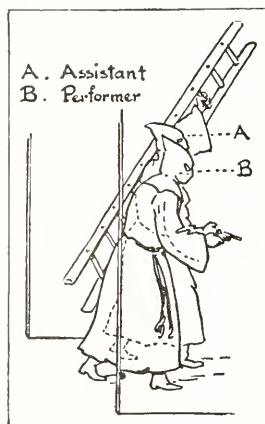
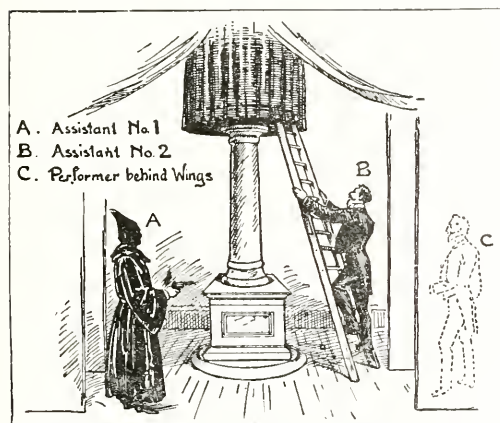
attention." More than that artfully worded patter weaves about a conjuring experiment an atmosphere of plausibility; people are often convinced that red is black, etc. Consider the dramatic setting of Houdin's magic chest and aerial suspension. Without patter these charming tricks would have degenerated to the commonplace. But Goldin is a law unto himself, and must not be judged by any standards other than those laid down by himself. He is a genius.

Goldin, who is of Jewish birth, began life as a traveling salesman. He took to conjuring to amuse himself and his friends. Afterwards he went on the stage. He has played before Edward VII of England, and William II of Germany. While playing an engagement in New York City, at Hammerstein's Theatre, August, 1904, he went about the city in an automobile known as the "red devil." Some of his facetious friends described him as a "little white devil" in a "big red devil." Among the numerous clever illusions performed by him is the "Invisible Flight," an exposé of which was published in the *Strand*, as follows:

"A pedestal about seven feet high is seen in the centre of the stage. The performer introduces a liveried assistant and entirely envelops him in a black cloak and hood, and puts a pistol in his right hand. He then fetches a ladder, places it against the pedestal, walks up, and steps from it on to the top of the pedestal, behind a curtain, which is hung in front, just reaching to his feet. The assistant puts the ladder back and fires the pistol, when immediately the curtain rises and a great surprise meets the gaze of the audience, for there on the pedestal, where the performer stepped only a moment previously, stands the liveried servant; but the climax is reached when the supposed assistant pulls off the cloak and hood, showing him to be none other than the performer himself.

"To perform this illusion it is necessary to have two assistants as near alike as possible and of similar stature to the performer himself, the rest being quite simple but requiring much exactness in execution. The performer cloaks assistant No. 1 and hands him the pistol, then goes to fetch the ladder, part of which is showing between the wings, the other part being held by assistant No. 2, who is made up to look, at a quick glance, exactly like the performer. The performer catches hold of the ladder and steps between the wings, leaving one leg showing; the assistant (No. 2) steps out backwards with the ladder, covering the performer momentarily, who then steps right in between the wings. The natural movement of the assistant in stepping back at the right moment looks as if it is still the performer; indeed, he is never suspected to be other-

wise. Assistant No. 2 places the ladder against the pedestal, walks up, and, stepping behind the curtain, unhooks a duplicate livery from it, quickly puts it on, pockets wig and mustache, or any other make-up which went to match the magician's appearance, and stands ready for the curtain to be raised, at the sound of the pistol, by a string leading inside to one of the stage hands. During this time assistant No. 1 has taken the ladder back to its original place, and the performer, who has meanwhile quickly donned a cloak and hood exactly as worn by assistant No. 1, reverses his previous action, stepping back with a pistol in his right hand, this again being so natural as not to excite suspicion. He then fires, when assistant No. 2 is seen upon the pedestal, believed by the audience to be assistant No. 1, the idea of a duplicate never occurring to them.



THE INVISIBLE FLIGHT.

as they have not seen the change take place. The performer then takes off his cloak and hood, bowing smilingly to the bewildered audience."

IV.

One of the most entertaining men in the profession is Frederick Eugene Powell. He is a man of scholarly attainments. Powell was born in Philadelphia, and was attracted to magic after having witnessed a performance by good old Signor Blitz. He became quite an expert at the art and gave entertainments for the amusement of his fellow students at the Pennsylvania Military Academy, at Chester, from which institution he graduated in 1877 with the degree of Civil Engineer and the rank of Lieutenant. After a short

career on the stage as a magician, he entered into mercantile life. Eventually he returned to his old love, magic, and began a series of entertainments at Wood's Theatre, corner of Ninth and Arch Streets, Philadelphia. His "second sight trick," in which he was assisted by his brother Edwin, was one of his strong cards. Robert Heller had just died, and there was no one to continue the art of second sight but Powell. After touring the United States and Spanish America he left the stage to take the intermediate chair of mathematics at the Pennsylvania Military Academy, which post he held for three years. The sedentary life affected his health, and he returned to the stage. Powell has played several long engagements at the Eden Musée, one of them lasting for six months. In the year 1892, he produced at this theatre for the first time to a New York audience the illusion "She." In 1902 he visited the Sandwich and Samoa Islands, and played in the principal cities of Australia. Powell was the first conjurer to introduce the improved "coin ladder" in this country.

Howard Thurston, the American illusionist, was educated for the ministry, but abandoned theology for conjuring. He possesses great skill with cards, and is an inventor of many novel feats of spectacular magic.

His stage represents an Oriental scene. Enter Thurston dressed somewhat after the fashion of a Tartar chieftain, loose trousers, short jacket, turban and high boots. He introduces his act with card manipulating, after which he produces from a shawl thrown over his arm a bowl from which bursts a flame, then another bowl from which spurts a jet of water like a fountain. He stands on a small stool of glass and produces a great quantity of water from a large tin can, by dropping into it the half of a cocoanut shell. Enough water wells up from the can to fill several receptacles. The thaumaturgist then defies the laws of gravitation by suspending a large ball in the air, *à la* Mahomet's alleged coffin at Mecca, and passes a hoop above the ball. When he leaves the stage, the ball follows him. This feat is accomplished by a stream of compressed air which plays upon the globe from a receptacle secreted in the sleeve of the performer. The conjurer walks to a stool, covers it with a shawl, and produces a life-size statue, which undergoes various pretty transformations. The illusion suggests that of Professor Pepper. Finally he produces pigeons from a borrowed hat, and toy balloons which float in the air. Altogether it is a pleasing and curious act.

V.

William G. Robinson for years acted as Alexander Herrmann's stage manager and machinist. He is a devotee of the magic art, a collector of rare books on legerdemain, and the inventor of many ingenious sleights, tricks, and illusions. When not employed at the theatre, he spends his time haunting the second-hand book stores, searching for literature on his favorite hobby. He has found time to write a profoundly interesting brochure called *Spirit Slate-Writing*, published by the Scientific American Company. After reading this work, I cannot see how any sane person can credit the reality of "independent slate-writing." It is a mere juggling trick.

Robinson was born in New York City, April 2, 1861, and received a common school education. He started life as "a worker in brass and other metals," but he abandoned the profession of Tubal Cain for conjuring. After the death of Herrmann, Robinson went as assistant to Leon Herrmann for several seasons, and then started out to astonish the natives on his own account, but without any appreciable success. Just about this time there came to the United States a Chinese conjurer named Ching Ling Foo, with a repertoire of Oriental tricks. One of them was the production of a huge bowl of water from a table cloth, followed by live pigeons and ducks, and last but not least a little almond-eyed Celestial, his son. This was but a replica of the trick which Philippe learned from the Chinese many years ago. Foo's performances drew crowds to the theatres. It was the novelty of the thing that caught the public fancy. In reality, the Mongolian's magic was not to be compared with that of Herrmann, Kellar, or Goldin. Beneath the folds of a Chinese robe one may conceal almost anything, ranging in size from a bed-post to a cannon ball. When Foo's manager boastfully advertised to forfeit \$500, if any American could fathom or duplicate any of the Celestial's tricks, "Billy" Robinson came forward and accepted the challenge. But nothing came of it. Foo's impressario "backed water," to use a boating phrase. Robinson was so taken with Ching Ling Foo's act that he decided to give similar séances, disguising himself as a Chinaman. Under the name of Chung Ling Soo he went to England accompanied by his wife and a genuine Chinese acrobat. He opened at the Empire Theatre, and not only reproduced Foo's best tricks but added others of his own, equally as marvelous. His success was instantaneous. Theatrical London went wild over the celebrated Chinese wizard, and gold began to flow into the

coffers of the Robinson ménage. So well was the secret kept that for months no one, except the attachés of the theatre, knew that Chung Ling Soo was a Yankee and not a genuine Chinaman. The make-up of himself and wife was perfect. Robinson even had the audacity to grant interviews to newspaper reporters. He usually held these receptions at his lodgings where he had an apartment



CHUNG LING SOO.
(Mr. Wm. G. Robinson.)

fitted up *à la Chinois*; the walls hung with silken drapery embroidered with grotesque dragons. The place was dimly lit by Chinese lanterns. Propped up on silken cushions, the "Yankee Celestial" with his face like a finely painted mask, sipped his real oolong and laughed in his capacious sleeves at the credulity of the journalistic hacks.

He gave his opinions on the "Boxer" trouble, speaking a kind of gibberish which the previously tutored Chinese acrobat pretended to interpret into English. Gradually it leaked out in theatrical circles that Chung Ling Soo was a Yankee, but this information never came to the public ear generally.

At the close of the "Boxer" uprising the real Ching Ling Foo



had returned to his beloved Flowery Kingdom, loaded down with bags full of dollars extracted from the pockets of the "Foreign Devils," yclept Americans. Under his own vine and bamboo tree he proceeded to enjoy life like a regular Chinese gentleman; to burn joss sticks to the memory of his ancestors, and study the maxims of Confucius. But the longing for other worlds to conquer with

his magic overcame him, and so in the year 1904 he went to England. Great was his astonishment to find that a pretended Mongolian had preceded him and stolen all of his thunder. In January 1905, Robinson was playing at the Hippodrome, London, and Ching Ling Foo at the Empire. There was great rivalry between them. The result was that Foo challenged Soo to a grand trial of strength, the articles of which appeared in the *Weekly Despatch*: "I offer £1,000 if Chung Ling Soo, now appearing at the Hippodrome, can do ten out of the twenty of my tricks, or if I fail to do any one of his feats."

A meeting was arranged to take place at the *Despatch* office, on January 7, 1905, at 11 A. M. The challenged man, "Billy" Robinson alias Chung Ling Soo rode up to the newspaper office in his big red automobile, accompanied by his manager and assistants. He was dressed like a mandarin. The acrobat held over his master's head a gorgeous Chinese umbrella. Robinson gave an exhibition of his skill before a committee of newspaper men and theatrical managers. Foo came not. The next day arrived a letter from Ching Ling Foo's impressario saying that the Mongolian magician would only consent to compete against his rival on the following condition: "That Chung Ling Soo first prove before members of the Chinese Legation that he is a Chinaman." This was whipping the Devil (or shall I say Dragon) around the stump. The original challenge had made no condition as to the nationality of the performers.

The *Despatch* said: "The destination of the challenge money remains in abeyance, and the questions arise: 'Did Foo fool Soo? And can Soo sue Foo?'"

The merits of this interesting mix-up are thus summed up by Mr. John N. Hilliard, in an editorial published in the *Sphinx*, Kansas City, Mo., March 15, 1905:

"While we do not take the controversy with undue seriousness, there is an ethical aspect in the case, however, that invites discussion. In commenting disparagingly on the professional ability of the Chinese conjurer, in belittling his originality and his achievements in the magic arts, Mr. Robinson (Chung Ling Soo) is really throwing stones at his own crystal dwelling place. Despite the glowing presentments of his press agent, one single naked truth shines out as clearly as a frosty star in a turquoise sky. It is violating no confidence to assert that had it not been for Ching Ling Foo, the professional status of Mr. William E. Robinson, masquerading as a Chinaman, and adopting the sobriquet of 'Chung Ling Soo,' would be more or less of a negative quantity to-day. Ching Ling Foo,

the genuine Chinaman, is indisputably the originator, so far as the Western hemisphere is concerned, at least, of this peculiar act, and Robinson is merely an imitator. Robinson is shrewd and has a 'head for business.' He doubtless realizes, as well as his critics, that in the dress of the modern magician, he would not be unqualifiedly successful, despite his skill with cards and coins and his knowledge of the art. The success of Ching Ling Foo in this country was his opportunity. Adopting the dress and make-up of a Mongolian, and appropriating the leading features of Ching's act, he went to Europe, where the act was a novelty, and scored a great success. Of course, from a utilitarian point of view, this success is legitimate; but in the light of what the American magician really owes to the great Chinese conjurer, it is ridiculous for Robinson to pose as 'the original Chinese magician,' and for him to say that Ching Ling Foo is 'a performer of the streets,' while he is the 'court magician to the Empress Dowager.' This may be good showmanship, but it is not fair play. The devil himself is entitled to his due; and, the question of merit aside, the indubitable fact remains that it is Ching Ling Foo, who is the 'original Chinese magician,' while 'Chung Ling Soo' is an imitator of his act and a usurper in the Oriental kingdom. But outside of the ethical nature of the controversy, we refuse to take it seriously."

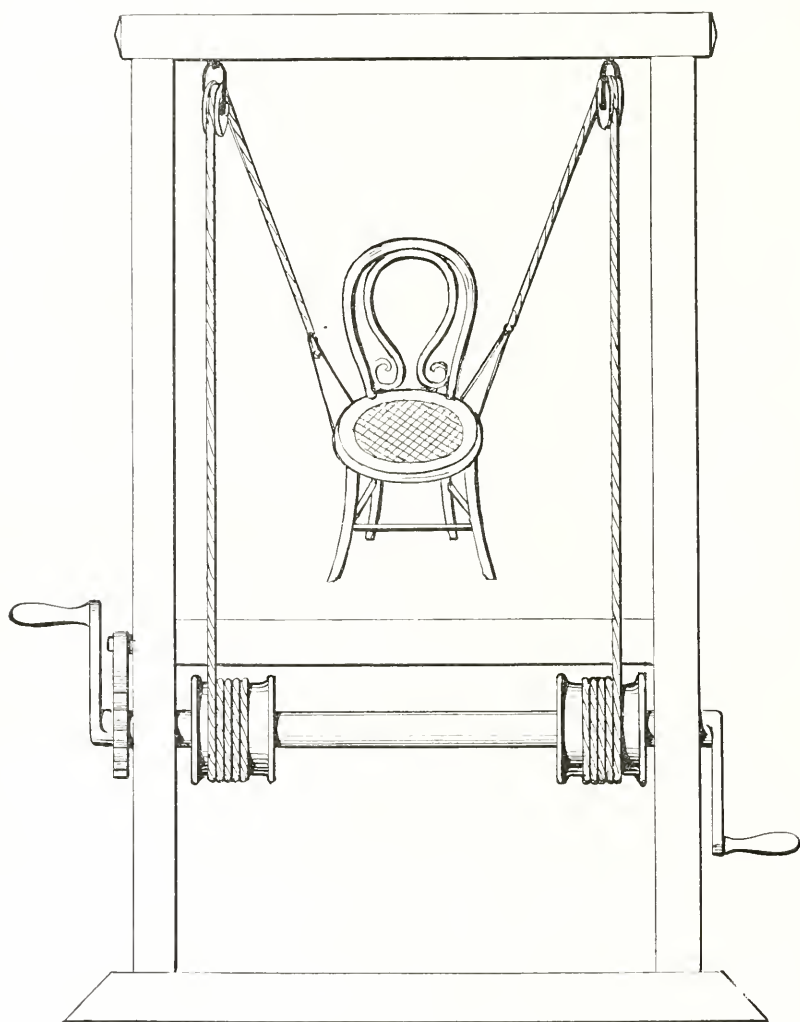
Robinson is the inventor of the clever stage illusion "Gone," which Herrmann exhibited, and which still forms one of the principal specialties of Kellar. I am indebted to my friend, Henry V. A. Parsell, for an accurate description of the trick, as at present worked by Mr. Kellar.

"At the rise of the curtain the stage is seen to have its rear part concealed by a second curtain and drapery which, being drawn up, discloses a substantial framework. This framework, at the first glance, gives one the impression that it is that horrible instrument of death, the guillotine. As will be seen, it consists simply of two uprights, with a bar across the top and another a little below the middle. Just below the centre bar is a windlass, the two ropes of which pass thorough two pulleys fixed to the top bar. The machine stands out boldly against a black background, the distance from which is indeterminate.

"After the introduction of the fair maiden 'who is to be gone,' an ordinary-looking bent wood chair is shown. The chair is then placed on the stage behind the framework, and by means of snap hooks, the two ropes from the windlass are attached to the side of

the chair. The maiden is now seated in the chair and her skirt adjusted that it may not hang too low.

"A couple of assistants now work the windlass and elevate the chair and its occupant until they are well above the middle cross



"GONE," ROBINSON'S ILLUSION.

[For an illustration of the trick see *The Open Court*, Vol. XIV, p. 431.]

bar. One assistant then retires, the other remains with one hand resting against the side of the framework. The performer fires his pistol thrice, upon which the maiden vanishes and the fragments

of the chair fall to the ground. The illusion is produced by a black curtain which lies concealed behind the middle cross bar. When the pistol is fired, the assistant, whose hand is on the frame, presses a spring which releases this black curtain which is instantly drawn up in front of the suspended girl. At this same moment the girl undoes a couple of catches which allows the main part of the chair to drop. She, meanwhile, being seated on a false chair-bottom to which the ropes are attached."

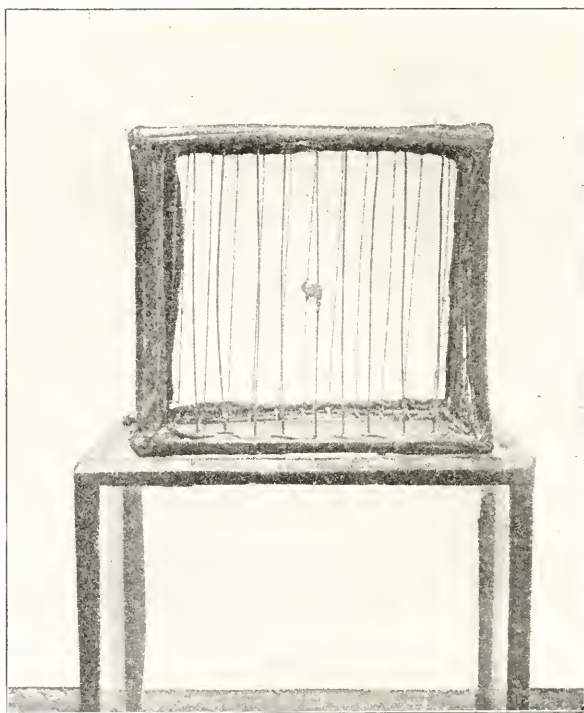
As originally devised by Mr. Robinson, the illusion was based upon the Pepper ghost-show, as will be seen in the illustration. Between the cross-bars of a slanting frame was a sheet of plate glass which, being invisible, left the lady on the chair in full view as long as the light fell upon her. A screen of the same color as the background was concealed above the curtain and placed at such an angle as to allow its reflection to pass out to the audience. The firing of the pistol was the signal for the assistant to turn a switch. The lady was then veiled in relative darkness while the screen was illuminated and its reflection on the plate-glass concealed her from sight. Carrying around the country a big sheet of plate glass is not only an expensive luxury but a risky one, so the illusion was simplified in the manner described by Mr. Parsell.

VI.

Bautier de Kolta was the greatest inventor of magic tricks and illusions since the days of Robert-Houdin. He was an absolutely original genius, who set at defiance Solomon's adage, "There is nothing new under the sun," by producing in rapid succession a series of brilliant feats that astounded the world of magic. I am indebted to my friend, Dr. W. Golden Mortimer, for facts concerning the career of de Kolta.

Joseph Bautier de Kolta was born in Lyons, France, in the year 1845. For centuries his father's people had inhabited the ancient palace of the Emperor Claudius. Each firstborn male of the Bautier family was given the Roman name. The subject of our sketch had a sister and two brothers, the latter, with himself, being set apart for the priesthood. His brother Claudius was not given to churchly ways but the second brother actually entered upon the holy orders. Joseph was at college when he first saw the wonders of magic as revealed by a strolling magician, and he became so fascinated with the possibilities of the art that he entered upon it at once.

He commenced his professional career at Geneva, Italy, in 1867, and shortly after became associated with his cousin, Julius Vidos de Kolta, who for fifteen years thereafter acted as his business manager. De Kolta was his mother's maiden name, adopted by her ancestors from one of the Hungarian provinces. Bautier de Kolta, as the magician was now known, traveled through Italy, where he presented a two hours' entertainment consisting of original sleights with a multiplicity of small properties. In 1875 he opened in Lon-



BAUTIER DE KOLTA'S FLYING CAGE.

don where a great furore was made with his flying cage, which he had introduced in Italy some two years earlier. Though de Kolta was not given to mishaps, at first presentation of his trick he threw the cage out into the audience, an accident which has been repeated by other performers.

He married Miss Alice Allen, in London, December 8, 1887. She afterwards traveled with him as his assistant, and acted as his business manager. In the year 1891, he made his first appearance

in the United States by playing a four months' engagement at the Eden Musée, New York City. On that occasion he introduced the large vanishing cage which he intended as a satire on the flying cage because of the repeated supposition that a bird was killed at each performance of that trick, but he never liked the large cage and soon abandoned it. In 1903 he returned to this country, and opened at the Eden Musée, on September 15, where he played many months. Among other new tricks he exhibited an improvement on the "rising cards," consisting in the continuous and successive rising of every card in a pack from out a glass tumbler; and a little sketch entitled "*la danse des millions*," in which the money-catching idea was elaborated. This number, delivered in Alexandrine verses with all the charm of a classic, was intended as hit at the extravagance of the Panama Canal Company under the régime of De Lesseps and his associates.

On that occasion he introduced an absolutely new illusion, the effect of which was as follows: The curtain rose showing a platform in the center of the stage. It was about four feet square and eighteen inches high, with four legs. The conjurer appeared conjuring a satchel in one hand. He informed the audience that he kept his wife in the receptacle. It was a convenient way of carrying her about with him. Opening the satchel, he took therefrom a die about six inches square, remarking that his consort was concealed within it. This he placed on the platform. After arranging two open fans on the back of the platform he touched a spring, whereupon the die opened to about two and a half feet square. Presto! —he lifted up the die and his wife appeared on the platform, sitting cross-legged like a Turkish lady on a divan.

The secret of this surprising illusion died with Bautier de Kolta. His wife refused to reveal it after his death.

From New York de Kolta went to New Orleans to play an engagement at the Orpheum Theatre. In that city he died of acute Bright's disease on October 7, 1903. The body was taken to London for burial.

Among the better known tricks and illusions invented by de Kolta may be mentioned the following: The flying bird cage (1873); the vanishing lady (1889); flowers from a paper cone (1886); the Cocoon and living pictures (1887); and his disappearance, at the top of a twenty-one foot ladder set upright against a bridge, in full light; soup plate and handkerchiefs; the decanters and flying handkerchiefs; multiplying billiard balls; production of a large flag on a staff; new ink and water trick, etc.

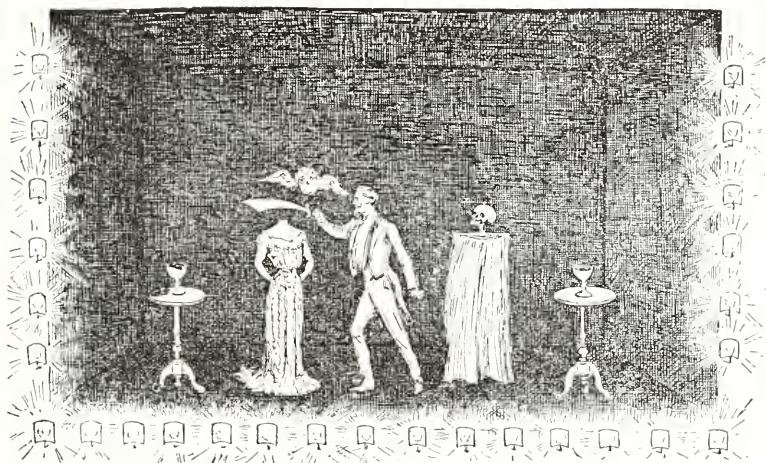
In conjunction with J. Nevil Maskelyne, he invented the "Black Art, or the Mahatmas Outdone." It has been exposed by the *Strand*, February, 1903, as follows:

"It is necessary for the benefit of those who have never seen an act of this kind to explain that everything is performed in a dark chamber—either the whole stage or a chamber fitted up in the center of it—draped entirely in black—sides, back, floor, and ceiling. The hall is placed almost in darkness, the only lights being a set of side-lights and footlights, which are turned towards the audience with reflectors behind, making it impossible for eyes to penetrate into the darkness beyond them. Everything used in the chamber is white, even the performer's dress, forming a contrast necessary to the illusion.

"The séance is usually commenced by the production of tables and goblets from space. In fact, everything required is mysteriously obtained from apparent nothingness. The performer, usually dressed in an Eastern costume, all of white, enters the empty chamber, and, requiring a wand, raises his hand, when one comes floating into it. He next taps the floor at the left side of the chamber and a small table suddenly appears. This he repeats at the right side, with the same result. He now taps one of the tables and a large goblet appears upon it in the same mysterious manner. This also he repeats at the other table, having now two tables several yards apart, with a goblet upon each. The whole are brought forward for inspection and replaced within the chamber. The performer takes one of the goblets, raises it, turns it over and around in several ways, and it is seen that the other is going through exactly the same movements without anyone being near it. The performer replaces his goblet upon the table; but the other remains suspended alone in mid-air, and the performer places a large ring over it and around it, showing wires or any other connection to be absent. He brings it forward and again hands it for examination, but on regaining it does not take it to the table, for by a wave of his hand the table comes dancing out to him and on receiving the goblet dances back to its original position. He next proceeds to borrow several watches and other articles of jewelry, which he takes into the chamber and places it into the goblet on the right. They are clearly seen to drop from his hand from several inches above; he shows his hands empty and immediately rushes across to the other goblet, brings it forward, and allows the audience themselves to take out all the jewelry which was placed in the right goblet only a moment previous. Having

finished with these articles they disappear as mysteriously and quickly as they appeared.

"The next illusion performed is the production from space of a live lady's bust suspended in a frame. The performer raises his wand and a large picture-frame suddenly hangs itself upon it. This is brought for examination, then placed in the center of the chamber, where it remains suspended in mid-air and sets up a swinging motion by itself. It is then covered momentarily with an Eastern rug, and when removed, a lady, devoid of legs, whose body completely fills the frame, is seen swinging with it. The 'live picture' is covered momentarily, and when the covering is withdrawn a large Union Jack is seen to have taken the place of the lady, who has vanished.



"BLACK ART"—SOME OF ITS MYSTERIES.

"The performer proceeds next with a decapitation act, in which a lady is beheaded in full view of the audience. At a wave of his hand a lady appears, and hands to him her own gruesome means of execution, a large, glittering sabre, which he takes, and with one swing cuts her head clean off where she stands. Catching the head as it falls, he places a pair of wings at the back of it, when it becomes a flying cherub, and immediately soars all about the chamber, finally returning to his outstretched hand. He then removes the wings and replaces the head upon the lady's shoulders, restoring her to life, for which kindness she quickly embraces him and vanishes. Wishing to get another such share of her favors the performer

endeavors to bring her back by magic aid, but is surprised by the appearance of a grinning ghost, whose whole body consists of a skull, with a moving jaw, draped with a white sheet. He catches it, and detaching its skull brings it forward for a closer scrutiny, the jaw moving all the time and the sheet dancing about alone. He then throws the skull into the air and it is seen no more.

"The séance is generally concluded by an invisible flight, the vanishing performer immediately reappearing amongst the audience. He takes the dancing sheet and entirely covers himself with it, standing in the center of the chamber, taking great care to drape himself in such a manner as to show the shape of his body. In a few seconds the sheet collapses, and before it has time to reach the ground a shout



INVISIBLE ATTENDANT PRODUCING
THE TABLE.



THE SWINGING BUST
EXPLAINED.

is heard at the back of the hall; the audience turning around naturally are surprised to see the performer standing amongst them, smilingly bowing in acknowledgment of the applause which greets him.

"As before mentioned, the whole of this takes place in darkness, obtained by the chamber being draped in black velvet and the floor covered with black felt. The brightness of the lights turned towards the audience, contrasting with the denseness of the black behind, dazzles the eye to such an extent that it cannot discern anything in the chamber that is not white or of a very light color. The stage is all arranged before the act, and the tables are in their respective places, but cannot be seen on account of their being draped with

black velvet. The goblets, frame, lady, ghost, etc., are all placed in readiness behind a black screen, also draped. None of this can be seen while they are behind the lights, if kept covered in black, no matter how near to the front they are placed. But how do they float about and appear so mysteriously? Very simply! An assistant is within the chamber, dressed in black velvet throughout, with black gloves and mask, covering all signs of white about him and making him perfectly invisible. He wears no boots, and the felt upon the floor deadens the sound of all his movements. He it is who really produces all the articles. When the performer stretches his hand out for the wand the assistant brings it from behind the screen and hands it to him with a floating movement. As the performer taps the



DECAPITATION.

Showing the girl's head covered with a black hood—The girl acting for the head falling to her knees.

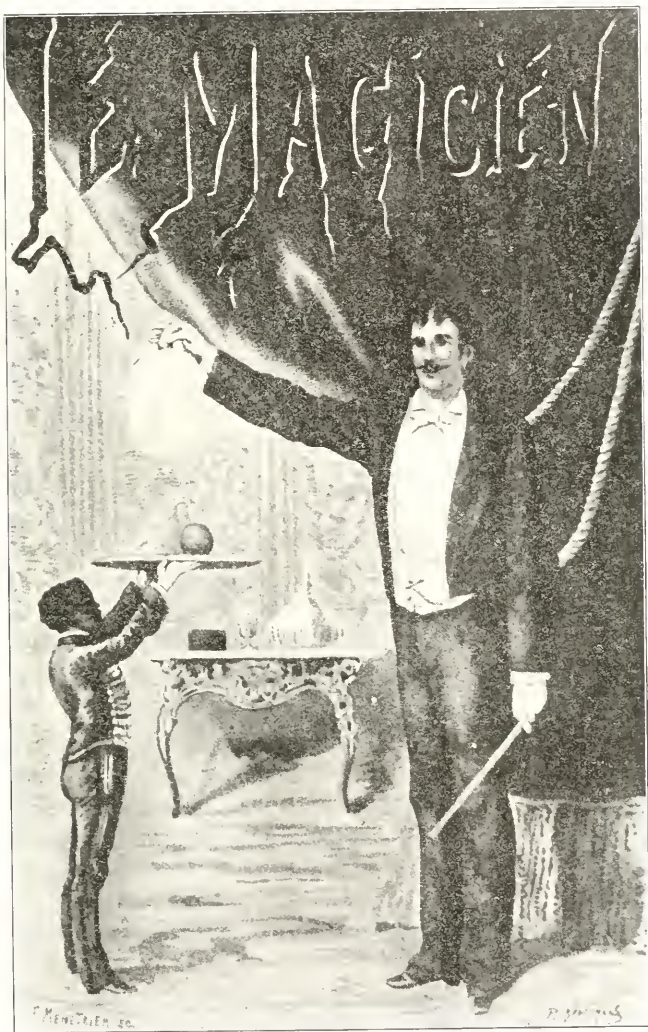
floor he immediately pulls away the black covering and the table instantly appears to view. The goblets are painted black inside, allowing him to hold them at the back with his fingers inside, unnoticed. After the tables are both produced he places the goblets upon them at the right moment with one hand while he pulls off the velvet with the other. The exposition is so quick and sudden that nothing suspicious can be noticed. The turning of the goblet is also the work of the invisible assistant, and is quickly changed from one hand to another when the ring is being passed over it. The watches, etc., are not placed in the goblet as they appear to be, but

dropped behind it into the assistant's hands, who takes them over to the other while the performer is exhibiting his empty hands. The picture-frame is also handed by the assistant, and when it is apparently placed in mid-air is really passed to the assistant, who quickly



hangs it up. When it is covered the lady steps from behind the screen to the frame, and stands upon a swing which nearly reaches to the floor behind it, and catches hold of the frame sides; the assistant draws away the velvet which draped her, and keeps the

swing in motion. The frame is attached to the wires of this swing. The lady is dressed in white to the waist, which exactly reaches the bottom of the frame. Below the frame she is dressed in black velvet. When the frame is again covered she steps back behind the



CAZENEUVE PERFORMING A TRICK.

screen while the assistant fits the Union Jack in the frame. In the decapitation act there are two ladies, one dressed all in white, the other standing behind her dressed in black, with her head covered

by a black hood. When the performer swings the sabre the assistant covers the white lady's head with a black velvet hood, at the same time pulling the hood quickly from the other lady's head, who immediately falls to her knees. The illusion looks perfect—a body apparently standing without a head and the head apparently falling. When the wings are put on she flaps them by means of a wire and runs round the chamber, stooping at intervals, so as to take an irregular course. The beheaded lady is restored by exactly the reverse method, and she disappears behind the screen. The ghost is danced about on a stick by the assistant, and when its skull is thrown into the air it is caught in a black bag. The performer takes the sheet and goes behind it and hands it to the assistant, and it is the latter who is seen draping himself, the performer running around to the back of the hall meanwhile, where he waits to see the sheet drop. The assistant, allowing time for this, simply lets go the top of the sheet, and, of course, cannot be seen behind it. The performer runs in before it has time to reach the ground, his invisible flight and immediate reappearance greatly astonishing the spectators."

Cazeneuve, better known as *le commandeur* Cazeneuve, the great card expert and magician, was born in Toulouse in 1840. He adopted magic, after witnessing a performance of that original genius, Bosco. His chivalric title was conferred upon him by the Sultan of Turkey, with whom he was a favorite. At the Court of Russia he and his charming wife made a great sensation with the second-sight trick. When the Franco-Prussian war broke out, Cazeneuve returned to Toulouse and raised two companies of soldiers, one of which was composed entirely of theatrical people. He joined Garibaldi with his command, and fought bravely for France. After peace was declared he prepared a new programme of magic and toured Europe and the Americas. He has a handsome home in his native city of Toulouse, where he has collected many rare curios. In the year 1905, Cazeneuve was touring Algeria with a magic show. He is a member of several scientific societies, and manifests great interest in physics.